
Proverbs, chap. 16. v. 8. "Better is a Little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right.

In reading this passage I have ever been Particularly struck with the pleasing idea it conveys: that though Providence May have vouchsafed to the virtuous poor man but few of those appendages in life which the world calls Comforts; he is not without his enjoyments---Enjoyments which are highly relished---conscious that the Little he has was Honestly Earned; for the words before us manifestly allude to such possession, as a man has himself acquired. How king Solomon could enter into the spirit of this assertion, I am at a loss to say; if we reason, according to the present system of things, we may really wonder that a man, seated on a Throne, surrounded with riches, with dignity, could search into the feelings of those in so different a walk in life from himself, and become acquainted with those sentiments that arise only from a state of virtuous poverty---But, we are told, that God had given him wisdom above every man; and his descriptions of things so apparently out of his way, and yet so Just, is a proof that His knowledge and experience were not confined, like those of the great men of the present age, to the circle in which they shine; but extended to All degrees and All estates of men whatever---He is Certainly right in the words before us; and,

your own private feelings must Tell you so: that "better is a Little with Fear of the Lord, than great Treasure and trouble therewith."

In reasoning upon this subject, I will consider it both in a Worldly and a Religious view.

1. So great are the worldly advantages of wealth, and so much are men now esteemed in proportion to what they have, that too many pursue it, without any regard to consequences. 'Get money, if you can, Honestly; but, However, get Money,' ---has been the ruling maxim of most ages; and the present one follows it up closely; but Were the breasts of men open, that we could read their Hearts, I fear numbers would be found, who, tho' seemingly in Easy circumstances, and apparently Enjoying the fruit of their industry, secretly condemn the measures they have taken to procure what they have, and wish, at times, that they were any thing but what they Are.

Wealth, amassed at the sacrifice of honesty and justice, like the viper in the fable, Stings the very breast that cherishes it.--- Can a man, with Any degree of feeling, pass a neighbour or an acquaintance, whom he may heretofore have injured, whose property he may have ravished from him or embezzled, without Some kind of Compunction? Can he look in the face of such a one, without the Bitter recollection of his own injurious conduct?-- No;--his own heart calls him Villain: and tho' he collects himself, and strives to shake off reflection, the horrid thought, like a spectre, rises again in view, and repeats the word Villain. This--if he is a man of Feeling:--should he be Void of feeling, he is still more to be pitied: he is then like the fool, that "said

in his heart, *There is no God.*" In the first case, his feelings, his conscience might rouse him, and induce him to restitution; to repair the injury he has done, before it be too late, and be again a Happy man; but, he who has No feelings, No conscience, but what is feared, is in the most Dreadful situation: he seems deserted by his God, and, as an object overlooked in his anger.

Such a man passes on in life, Devouring & Wasting the substance he is master of: Enjoy it he does not, for Enjoyment arises only from pleasing reflection. Such a one, I say, passes on a few Trksome years, and seemingly prosperous; held forth, perhaps, to the world, as an Example, to be suddenly cut off. "The wicked and ungodly Seldom live out Half their days." "They shall soon be cut down." "I have seen, (says the Psalmist,) the ungodly in great Power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree:-- I went by, and lo--he was gone:---I sought him, but--his place could no where be found."

As he approaches the close of life, his breast, perhaps, shall be unlocked, his conscience set at liberty, and all the injuries he has done to others, shall, like so many frightful fiends, rise in array before him. Then, tho' too late, shall he wish he had not acted as he has;---Then would he give the World, (if the world was in his possession,) to repair the errors of his life;--he is anxious to restore that property he either ravished from the orphan, or purloined from the incautious;--he has it not to give, and dies--in all the agonies of despair.

Should a man's fraudulent dealings with others be of such a kind, as he can foolishly reconcile to himself; should he justify his own cause by that ridiculous argument of the dishonest man,

That we live, as it were, in a state of plunder, where the strongest arm puts in a claim for the biggest share, and that, in his transactions with men, he takes only those worldly, those common advantages which They take upon all occasions; that is to say, he Only robs Those who rob Others; he is still equally sinful and equally wretched; for the time will Assuredly come, when he will be of a different way of thinking, and would give all he possesses that he had not done it.--“For every man must bear his own burden.” “A Small thing (says the Psalmist) that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly.”

It is an old saying, that ‘ill-gotten wealth never thrives,’ & we see it continually verified. Many have been the instances of great fortunes, Ill-acquired, mouldering away; and families, Thus made, coming to decay; “the sins of the fathers being visited on the children, even to the third and fourth generation.” Is not this, then, an argument of the highest moment, independent of any Religious views, to induce us to be upright in our dealings, and fair in our transactions; that God will prosper our virtuous undertakings, multiply that wealth acquired by honest industry, give a blessing to our endeavours, and a stability to all we possess?--Let me ask you, who are parents, and love your children, whether to make some future provision for them does not actuate your labours, and whether the satisfaction of so doing is not further sweetened, with the prospect of its being accompanied with the blessings of Heaven?

I speak now from my own feelings.--I am exactly in your situation--the father of many children, born to no estate, but to depend upon their own virtuous and honest endeavours, assisted by

what Providence, by the like means, may enable me to leave them. I boast no Superior reason, no Refined sentiments: I am a man like yourselves;---what I feel, You must feel: and I declare to you, in the presence of the Most High, that as a provision for my family has ever been a Spur to my actions, so independent of any Other motives, love for that family would ever keep those actions Honest. 'Tis Worldly policy; nay, 'tis Religious policy;--policy that never fails, even in the Present generation; except it be, that God has some blessings in store for the righteous, which, for wise and good purposes, he may withhold at one time, to pour on him or his at some Future period.

Never, then, envy the riches of others, nor repine at your own situation; but "learn, in whatever state you are, therewith to be content." Never let the wish of adding a little more to your gains lead you into acts of unfair dealing. Be upright; be Honest. "Better is a Little with Righteousness, than great revenues without right." Never be tempted to take an Advantage of the Incautious, nor Impose upon the credulity or the ignorance of others; buy with Fairness; sell with Right weights and measures; be Moderate in your profits; be Just to your neighbours; be True to the state; be Honest; be Frugal; be Industrious, and beg God's blessing on your undertakings; and, be assured, you'll be Rich. If you have not the Luxuries of life, you will command the Necessaries; and these are Riches to a Contented mind. God will prosper your endeavours, and bless your families. "I have been young, (says the Psalmist,) and now am Old; and Yet saw I Never the Righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." Believe me, there is a super-

intending Providence every where. "Even the hairs of our head are all numbered." "He feedeth the hungry, and giveth raiment to those that call upon him."

Imagine not that a large family is an Incumbrance. To a frugal, industrious man, virtuous children are a Blessing. They bring a Fortune into the world with them, and are a mark of God's peculiar Favor. I have conversed with many on this subject, and never yet found, but that the man with Ten children lived as well with those Ten, as he did when he had but One. They encrease his exertions and industry, "He that gathereth by Labour, shall increase." Besides, numerous families generally prosper Best; the tie of relationship binds them to each other; and while an Only child, thro' some mishap, or want of friends, shall fall; the offspring of a numerous family shall stand its ground, assisted and supported by brotherly love and compassion: so that, all other things considered, the Larger a man's family is, the Greater blessings he may expect to receive.

Further; it must be no small pleasure to an honest man to meet the esteem of his virtuous neighbours. All men give a preference to the Fair dealer, and flock to him who will not deceive them. A reputation, once acquired, is easily preserved. Acquire, then, a good repute; preserve it, and wealth will follow in apace. It may not be the lot of every one to acquire an Independent fortune; but still, he may be wealthy; for Competence is wealth to a Contented mind. He who has fewest wants is richest. If a man earns only fifty pounds a year, and spends but forty, he is far richer than he whose annual income is one thousand pounds, and spends twelve hundred: and, as every individual

may be considered, in his sphere of action, as the Centre of a circle, some of a larger, some of a smaller; whoever fills that circle Properly, be it ever so Small; if he acts his part in society as one of Conscientious character, a Fair dealer, and a Good man; he will be revered by his neighbours, and respected by all who know him. The Little he possesses, be it ever so Small, will be enjoyed with a pleasure, known only to those who have the Heart-felt satisfaction of eating the Honest bread they Earn.

So much for Worldly motives to honesty; let us now consider the Religious ones.

2. How quietly and calmly does that man lay his head upon his pillow, who has nothing to upbraid himself with; but, whose inward monitor applauds his conduct! How serene and placid is the evening of that man's day, whose "conscience is void of offence towards God, and towards all men!" Paint to yourselves the happy situation of the Virtuous tradesman, who, after the toil of occupation is over, sits down with an affectionate wife and family about him, recounting the business of the day; summing up their Honest, though, perhaps, Little gains; regaling themselves in the best manner those gains will afford; congratulating each other on their happy success, returning thanks to that Being to whom they ultimately owe it, contriving how far and in what way they can be charitable, and bestow their tribute of thanks; begging God's blessing on the morrow, and retiring peacefully to rest. I say, paint to yourselves Such a character, and you must fall in love with the picture!

Where are the men of Independent fortune or great Riches, that can boast of a more pleasurable evening than this? Sorry am I

to observe, in general, they are not Half so happy. Cards, dice, and an eternal round of dissipation, fill up all their time, waste the important hours, and leave them neither room for thought, nor a moment for reflection; but hurry them on, and often early, to the precipice of the grave, in which they fall--unheeded, unlamented:--and oh--that it ended there!--But, it is not to such to whom I Now am talking--May they meet with that mercy Hereafter, they are Here so little solicitous about!

This is not the case I hope with You: I flatter myself, I am addressing those who listen with an honest heart, and wish to benefit by what they hear. Let me, then, ask you, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What are all the pleasures, the indulgencies, the gratifications of life, when put in competition with our happiness hereafter? Our passage through this world is merely a journey; we are all travellers to a bourn whence none can return; and therefore, tho' it may be Discreet and Wise to render our way as agreeable and as pleasant as we can; it is absolutely Indiscreet and Unwise to suffer it to engross All our thoughts and attention. This life is a state of probation, a state of trial, in which we are placed by our Beneficent Creator, to work out our own salvation. According to our conduct and behaviour Here, we shall be punished or rewarded Hereafter. It is a matter, therefore, of the highest concern, and ought not to be trifled with. Our stay in this world is temporary and uncertain: we may be here a Year; we may not be here a Month. Beware, then, of wasting the precious hours, and work while it is called to-day, and whilst you have Time to work. Seize the moments as they rise, and make a proper use of them.

“ Be sober, be vigilant,” and do your duty, whilst you have it to do, as Honest men. Fraudulent practices are a manifest breach of the eighth commandment, a sin which, if unrepented of, will never be forgiven. Why, then, risk our salvation upon a matter, which has neither a worldly nor a heavenly advantage to recommend it? “ What shall it profit a man, tho’ he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul? or What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” All our labours to acquire riches are ineffectual, if God does not assist us. “ Paul may plant, and Apollos water, and all to no purpose, unless God gives the increase.” Let us rely, then, upon His good providence, and follow the mode which He has prescribed, which is “ to do Justly, and to walk humbly with our God.”

Before I conclude, I must observe, that there are two maxims which I could wish were painted on the most conspicuous part of every man’s [counting-house and] shop, that they might constantly be in the view of every dealer. These are,

That it is God Only who gives a man power to get wealth; and
That it is not a clear Estate, but a clear Soul that makes men happy.

Were these religious maxims continually in our mind; would we Do as we would be Done By; things would wear a very different face; instead of coveting or grasping at the property of others, we should sit down contented with our own Honest earnings; half the animosities & bickerings in life would be obliterated; Selfishness would not have a name in the world, Candour & Openness would be the characteristic of every dealer; content would reign, universally, every where; and this life would be a terrestrial Paradise.



